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CONSIDERATIONS
PRELIMINARY TO THE
COMMENCEMENT OF A WAR,
WITH
REMARKS
UPON A
LATE MELANCHOLY EVENT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CRISIS STATED."

"If we looked to the country where the cause of war was said principally to originate, the situation of the *United Provinces* appeared to me to furnish abundance of prudential arguments in favour of peace. If we looked to *Ireland*, I saw nothing there that would not discourage a wise statesman from putting the connection between the two kingdoms to any unnecessary hazard. *At home*, if it be true that there are seeds of discontent, war is the hot-bed in which these seeds will soonest vegetate; and of all wars, in this point of view, that war is most to be dreaded, in the cause of which kings may be supposed to be more concerned than their subjects."

FOX'S LETTER to the Electors of *Westminster*.

L O N D O N,
SOLD BY J. DEBRETT, PICCADILLY.

[PRICE SIXPENCE.]

COMMITTEE ON THE
FINANCIAL TO THE

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A. T. O. R. T.

LATE MELANCHOLY EVENT.

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“ THE following are the measures which
“ prudence directs to be observed at the
“ commencement of a war.

“ 1. Supposing the reason of the war is
“ just in itself, yet the dispute ought to be
“ about something of great consequence: Since
“ it is better to relinquish part of our right,
“ when the thing is not considerable, than to
“ have recourse to arms to defend it.

“ 2. We ought to have at least a probable
“ appearance of success; for it would be a
“ criminal temerity to expose ourselves to cer-
“ tain destruction, or to run into a greater to
“ avoid a lesser evil.

“ 3. Lastly, There should be a real necessity
“ for taking up arms; that is, we ought not
“ to have recourse to force, but when we can
“ employ no milder method of recovering our
“ right, or of defending ourselves from the
“ evils with which we are menaced.

“ These measures are agreeable not only to
“ the principles of prudence, but also to the
“ fundamental maxims of sociability and the
“ love of peace,—maxims of no less force
“ with respect to nations than individuals. By
“ these a Sovereign must therefore necessarily
“ be directed: Justice obliges him to it, in
“ consequence of the very nature and end of
“ Govern.

“ Government. For as he ought to take par-
“ ticular care of the State and of his subjects,
“ he should not expose them to the evils of a
“ war, except in the last extremity, and when
“ there is no other expedient left but that of
“ arms.”

Burlamaqui's Principles of Politic Law.

CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

THE time is now at hand, when every heart
used to exult at the approach of that sea-
son which lengthens the light of heaven for the
occupations of peace, dilates the soul of man
with gratitude, and supplies his wants with un-
sparing profusion. But this the season of hope
and joy is, by the circumstances of the times,
converted into a sullen interval of terror and
suspense. The question now is, whether the
new year shall revolve to the chearful song of
unsuspecting security, or to the laments of sor-
row, and the din of war: Whether the day
shall be lengthened, and the spring return to
bless and enrich the countryman in his fields,
the manufacturer in his warehouse, and the ad-
venturer in his voyage; or whether our fertile
vallies shall be changed into depopulated wastes,
our artificers ruined by a suspension of employ-
ment, our merchants impoverished by an inter-
ruption

ruption of trade, our people oppressed under an enormous taxation, and our friends swept off the victims of famine, pestilence, and the sword.

A question so alarming naturally disposes the mind to the most serious considerations; but alarming as it appears upon this statement, it perhaps does not include the whole of the alternative. The question then not only affects the interests of the present generation, but the interests of all our posterity: It is not merely confined to the issues of the present war, but seems clearly decisive of the fate of the constitution itself, inasmuch as at the conclusion of a long, bloody, and expensive war, the spirit of discontent which is reported to prevail even at present, acquiring new pretexts from the misfortunes that may attend it, new strength from the depressed situation of our affairs, emboldened by that weariness and disgust which follow every campaign, and co-operating with the increasing ardor of the people to obtain a reform, may, under rash management, lead to consequences which experience tells us are probable, and which it is our duty to deprecate, as it may hereafter be our fate to deplore.

Upon a crisis thus awful and tremendous, the people of England are called to decide. If *they* approve the measure as just, hostilities may

may be carried on with vigor. If *they* think it right to remonstrate, no minister will dare to involve them in the calamities of war. Upon *their* virtue, wisdom, and public spirit, depend the establishment of a peaceful commercial system, the interests of rational freedom, of enlightened humanity, of pure religion; a stake incomparably *greater* than the most powerful empire ever possessed since the creation of the world!

With what temper ought we then to commence the discussion of so vast and overpowering a subject? Or how shall we sufficiently liberate our minds from those prejudices which have grown with their growth, and become interwoven in their texture? How shall we acquit ourselves of this incumbent duty, influenced, as we are wont to be, by hopes and fears, by the ties of gratitude and affection, by habitual deference, by former pledges, by present connections, and by the alternate sway of those violent passions which occurrences, both foreign and domestic, are calculated most powerfully to excite?

Amidst these occurrences there is one, the force of which it is our duty in particular to obviate, as it is of all others the most likely to have a decisive effect, at this time, upon the

mind of a generous people, distinguished not more for their warlike virtues, and a romantic love of freedom, than for loyalty to their monarchs, and the godlike qualities of justice and mercy.

With sentiments surely of the deepest commiseration must this people have read the fate of the unfortunate Louis, while no terms can adequately express their detestation and abhorrence of that barbarous faction, who, contrary to the forms and spirit of justice, contrary to the sense of the people they represent, contrary to the laws of God and man, have wantonly polluted the capital of a populous and once flourishing kingdom with the blood of the mildest monarch that ever sat upon an absolute throne!

When the aggravating circumstances that attended this unparalleled act of cruelty and outrage are exhibited to the nation in the alarming expressions of an impassioned eloquence, I should dread the effect that might thence be derived upon a question which certainly ought to be tried upon its own merits, and in justice kept free from the bias of such considerations: I should dread the consequences of such an appeal to the feelings and honor of the English nation, did I not recollect an instance when
their

their feelings gave way to policy, and when the pursuit of honor was for a while suspended by the apprehensions of interest; did I not recollect that the *slave-trade* is *still* sanctioned by its legislature, that it *still* traffics in the blood and miseries of our fellow-creatures, to the prevention of all the blessings of civil society, the establishment of peace, happiness, commerce, and liberty, of impartial laws, of a pure administration of justice, of a mild, beneficent religion, in the vast uncivilized regions of the African continent.

When I recollect this fact, (though grieved that such a fact should exist for the support of my argument) I cannot think that the English people will suffer their passions hastily to urge them to a romantic crusade, nor that they will deem it consistent to place themselves in the *moral chair*, while such injustice is executing by their *own* hands, and while such a stain of blood is imprinted upon their national character.

It is therefore to be hoped, if they think that they are bound to erect themselves into the avengers of royal innocence, and to commence a sort of exterminatory contest from the honorable feelings of humanity and justice, that they would

would at least place themselves in a condition to begin that contest, secure from the hazard of recrimination, and the impeachment of consistency; that they would first, by one decisive preliminary resolution, wipe off for ever the foul stigma that attaches to their character, and enter this novel career of vindictive justice with *a mind unreprieved, and a conscience void of offence.*

Until this be performed, it may be salutary, though not pleasing, to revive occasionally the memory of our subsisting infamy, and to correct the extravagancies of an enthusiasm which ought to dispense blessings to human nature.

Let us then confine to its just objects the operation of our sensibility: Let the outraged, afflicted African enjoy, as is most due, the first and fairest fruits of British sympathy: The tortured African, who, amidst toil, and agony, and chains, lamenting the hardest lot of subjugated man, lifts up a voice of feeble supplication to a fellow-creature whom he has never offended, who has deprived him of liberty and all its joys, and in whose barbarous hands are the issues of his life,—*he* surely has the first claim to our tears as individuals, to our redress as a people; to *him* we must discharge the long-accumulated debt, before we can safely

ly boast of our extraordinary feeling, or act from such motives in the present crusade.

Let us then rather be discriminate and progressive in our *humanity*, than rash and intemperate in our *vengeance*: Let us rather turn the course of our generous sympathies, and instantly perform an act of absolute, indispensable duty, which will cost us nothing, than, upon the pretext of compassion alone, enter into a war, which must impoverish and depopulate our country: Let us remember, that, while we are execrating the savage ferocity of civil assassination, the miseries of thousands brutalized by our edicts, and the unexpiated blood of multitudes murdered by our means, still cry to Heaven for vengeance on our heads!—that, while we are urged on, perhaps by German intrigue, at the hazard of incalculable evils, with British blood and British treasure, to commence a contest of extirpation against the murderers of an European sovereign, that the Princes of Africa are still incited by our bribes, and enabled by our ammunition, to wage unrelenting war, for purposes the most horrid, against millions of the innocent and unprotected of mankind!

Were it allowable, before we enter into the argument itself, to abate the force of one prejudice

dice by raising up another in a contrary direction, it might not be wholly uninstruc-
tive to enquire from what cause and for what pur-
poses England has been thrown into this most
critical situation; it might be serviceable to ex-
amine what mighty obligation we are under to
the emperor and his new ally; whether the war
that threatened to desolate the fairest provinces
of Europe, in the last summer, originated from
the ambition of France, or the despotism of
Germany; and whether the late conquest of
the Netherlands was the long-settled plan of
deliberate vengeance, or the result of a sudden
resentment and *provoked retaliation*.

These questions, for good reasons, it might
be useful to determine; for if upon the deci-
sion it should appear, that the pacific intentions
of France were *alone* defeated by the sanguinary
ambition of barbarous invaders, that the tran-
quillity of Europe has been *alone* interrupted
by the wild schemes of unprincipled despots,
that armies and countries have already been
wasted in the contest, that the banishment of
thousands, the confiscation of their property,
the deposition and murder of their Sovereign,
and all the gloomy horrors of civil rage and
civil assassination, have been the consequence of
this

this unparalleled attempt of foreign powers upon the *lives and liberties* of 25 millions of people, we surely shall be brought to regard with mixed sentiments this complicated scene of guilt and horror, and to pour forth a just share of indignation upon the primary movers of this infernal rout, whom, it seems, we are likely to assist indirectly in completing their barbarous and unrelenting crusade.

And even upon *supposition* of the necessity of a war, these suggestions might still have a salutary effect, not indeed by abating our ardor, or turning our prejudices against the contest, for this, *if its necessity were proved*, would be treacherous and base; but by enabling us to form a clear idea of the ends and purposes for which alone, on our part, the war is undertaken, and to preserve a just distinction between the objects *we* ought to propose to *ourselves*, and the objects which the despotic powers of Germany propose to themselves as the end of their conduct.

If we confound these very different, nay opposite circumstances, and, after engaging in the dispute, adopt all the plans and projects of *German allies*,—if we are to be made accessary to crimes perpetrated by *their* tyrannical ambition,—if, forgetting our own particular cause of war, and our resolution not to interfere in

the domestic affairs of France, we should, nevertheless, exert all our efforts, in conjunction with powers combined professedly, either totally to annihilate that country, or to restore the restless, intriguing, perfidious government, which it formerly possessed,—our character for honor and probity, as a nation, will be effaced; our spirit and freedom, as a people, will be destroyed; and our only consolation, as Englishmen, will be, that we suffer the innocent, unconscious dupes of ministerial confidence, and Prussian intrigue.

These and similar reasonings might, I think, justly be urged, in order to inspire us with temper, caution, and reserve; to secure us from becoming, in any part of the business, the despicable instruments of German ambition; and to render us jealous of entering into any combination with powers whose pretexts for the war we know to be infamous, and whose object is totally distinct from that which ought to be our own.

Explanations upon such a subject never can divide the force, or mislead the opinions, of the nation.—The more clearly the people are taught to discern their interest, the more courageously will they pursue it. Let ministers point it out to them fairly and ingenuously, without

without deceit or reservation,—and they will cordially support it with vigor and effect.

If the absolute right of declaring war, as well as the inevitable necessity of exercising that right at present, be clearly made out,—if *negociation has been tried without success*,—if the sole end of hostilities be distinctly ascertained,—if the injury be fully proved, and the reparation justly proportioned,—I should not conceive that there existed a single Englishman who would not most cheerfully co-operate in preparing for the campaign.

When these points are fully explained, and we are assured that we act justly upon our own quarrel, and not upon that of the courts of Vienna and Berlin, a unanimity may be confidently hoped for; which, by a grand, magnanimous display of the national force, may spare the sorrows of a protracted war, and secure to our beloved country the lasting enjoyments of commerce and peace.

There is another topic already slightly alluded to, upon which a few remarks will not be unseasonable: It has no relation to the question concerning the *justice*, but is intimately connected with that concerning the *expediency*, of a war.

If our *right* of commencing hostilities should

be proved ever so clearly, the consideration of the *policy* of the measure, in the reported or real state of the country, will become an object of most serious concern. That a war with France is necessary and inevitable, few will be bold enough to maintain: Supposing, however, for the sake of argument, what is by no means granted, that, though we cannot plead an absolute necessity, we may a justifying right, it remains for us to examine the probable consequences of exerting this right in times and circumstances like the present.

1st. If the lower ranks of the country be really so disaffected as some profess to believe, with what views of utility can a war be commenced against a people who are reported to maintain those very notions, the popularity of which is the imputed cause of our insurrections at home? Acting under the conviction of this circumstance, what prudent statesman would put the nation to the hazard of a war, in the prosecution of which, arms must necessarily be placed in the hands of those who are thus supposed to entertain opinions friendly to their enemies, and hostile to their own government?

The measure of a war, therefore, if discontents already prevail, has a manifest tendency
to

to aggravate the cause, and to render the operation of them more dangerous and extensive.

2dly. If the lower ranks be not really disaffected, a war may, even in this case, produce as dangerous an effect, by disturbing the tranquillity of the country, as in the former case, by encreasing its discontents. Suppose the nation to be perfectly loyal, there is no reason to imagine it will give an implicit faith and support to a ministry who have suspected its honor, and traduced it as seditious; or that it will blindly follow, without examination, through the prolonged horrors of an impolitic war, those men whose conduct, if the nation be loyal, must be accused of duplicity, and if seditious, must be exposed to the charge of weak precipitation.

Lastly, Whatever be the precise fact respecting the existence or non-existence of seditious opinions in the country, of this there can be no doubt, that the principles of civil liberty and just government are every day better explained and more generally understood. Sentiments, favorable to the liberty and happiness of the human race, gradually gain ground. Curiosity is awakened, by the very restraints which false policy imposes: The mass of the
people

people begin to be informed upon the subject ; they reflect not only upon their rights, but their wrongs,—and, demeaning themselves as peaceable citizens, encourage a reasonable hope, that, in their applications to a just legislature, they will meet with satisfactory redress. Thus public opinion, like the blood in the natural body, circulates silently and unperceived ; and, like that fluid which supports animal life, its effects will be to enliven and regenerate the political system.

Is then a war intended to controul this diffusion of opinion, and to restrain the liberty of thought itself?—preposterous attempt! Opinion is ever strengthened by opposition : Often has the world been deluged in innocent blood to arrest its progress—the undertaking has been vain. Error itself acquires force from persecution : How much more shall truth be invigorated by intolerant resistance !

Its friends have nothing to fear in its behalf ; for it has survived the ravages of war, the insults of bigotry, and the tortures of inquisition. —The armies of despotism may capture towns, dismantle fortifications, and lay whole kingdoms under contribution ; but, in this enlightened age, they will hardly be able to enforce

conviction

conviction by the sword, or to subdue the high-minded efforts of steady, persevering liberty.

This, therefore, being an incontestible fact, that political subjects are daily better understood by the *people* at large, experience assures us, that war, instead of preventing discussion, will only inflame the temper with which it is desirable these subjects should be examined, and that a war against the sentiments of mankind will be of all wars the most dangerous and unpopular.

The people begin to reflect, that, even in the most just contests, the triumphs of victory are transient, the benefits of it uncertain, the means of attaining it shocking to all true feeling; and that after joy, riot, and acclamation, they return home to labour and to wretchedness, to bewail, amidst visionary glory, the loss of their friends, the scarcity of subsistence, and the increase of taxation. They at length see into the folly, wickedness, and misery of those contests in which they themselves, except as sufferers, are rarely concerned. They regard their grievances with the honest feelings of respectful subjects; they apply themselves to discover the cause from which they arise, and daily becoming more enlightened and more importunate, will wisely recur to legal means of obtaining

obtaining that upon which the salvation of the country depends, a *timely and temperate reform*.

Till, therefore, proofs are laid before us of the absolute necessity of a war, (when they are, it will be our business to canvass them) such reflections as have been stated above may probably have a beneficial effect. They will tend to inspire us with a sense of our real situation, to keep the public opinion straight till the day of decision, to ascertain the chief points which ought to regulate our verdict, to allay the fervor by directing the course of our inflamed humanity, and thus gradually to superinduce that temper of mind, which, in the present most awful crisis, it is no less our interest than our duty to possess.

Feb. 1st, 1793.

F I N I S.

